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Deep Learning Groups: Combining Emotional and Intellectual Learning¹

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses deep learning groups (DLGs) which seek consensually validated truths (intellectual learning) and the experiential understanding of feelings (emotional learning). Deep learning enhances the maturation of DLG members. The theories of Jürgen Habermas, Robert Langs, and Virginia Satir provide the bases for deep learning groups. Using transcripts from two seminars, examples of deep learning are presented. Deep learning is marked by catharses of recognition and release, and results in insights and questions.

Definition: a metalogue is a conversation about some problematic subject. This conversation should be such that not only do the participants discuss the problem but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also relevant to the same subject. . . . notably, the history of evolutionary theory is inevitably a metalogue between human beings and nature, in which the creation and interaction of ideas must necessarily exemplify evolutionary process.—Gregory Bateson

Deep learning groups are metalogues which explicitly incorporate emotions.

Introduction

Imagine that there is a fundamental learning experience. It is at once emotional and intellectual, mental and physical, social and personal, totally unique yet freely shared. There is a communal place where this experience becomes positively energized and charged. This is the kind of experience which I call "deep learning."

This paper presents a theoretical model with examples of deep learning from practice in small groups. Groups such as seminars are usually designed to promote intellectual learning. Emotional learning goes on as well, but this is unacknowledged and/or unconscious. Negative emotions, such as shame, anger, jealousy, and fear may become associated with seminars.

Therapy groups, by contrast, promote emotional learning, with intellectual learning tangential. I have often had the feeling after leaving a group where intense emotional exploration had occurred that I was at a loss to explain to anyone else what was learned, or to transfer the learning elsewhere. In order to effectively transfer emotional learning to another setting, it is vital that learning be connected with a theory, or have a reflective intellectual component.

The kind of intellectual learning I am referring to has a specific meaning. The learning is not a kind of discernment, cognition, knowing, or calculation, although it may include these mental processes. Nor is it equatable to learning a skill or absorbing information. Intellectual learning is an inquiry into meanings and connections. It is a philosophical quest for understanding. It is similar to what Karl Mannheim (1936) calls "substantive" rationality, in contrast to "instrumental" rationality. Instrumental rationality seeks causes and effects and means-ends relationships. Substantive rationality looks at the whole, and seeks a gestalt of meaning, including the full array of values involved in any course of action or event. Instrumental reason seeks to obtain power, to predict and control; substantive reason to understand and to ameliorate.

The knowledge sought in intellectual learning is an interested knowledge. It does not claim ethical neutrality or objectivity. It is knowledge aimed toward the search for eternal values (or, if "eternal" is too grandiose,

a return to classical values) such as goodness, truth, beauty, and justice. Intellectual learning is socially and politically responsible knowledge.

Emotional learning is more simply a love for the fullness of human expression, or awareness of human spirit. Because emotions tend to be ignored in our educational systems, we must reclaim them. As Alice Miller (1984) so eloquently explains, our practices of parenting and of pedagogy are abusive in the extent to which they deny our self understanding of feelings.

Theory of Deep Learning

Thesis: Intellectual Learning in Habermas

The most basic foundation for the group process is Jürgen Habermas's model of the ideal speech situation. The aim of the communicating group in the ideal speech situation is to seek truth—or intellectual learning. The kind of group process which occurs in Habermas's ideal speech situation is utopian. Its purpose is to serve as a model against which to measure actual group practice.

Deep intellectual learning in groups is distorted by power. Since organizations are hierarchies of power, special effort must be made to insulate and protect group processes from the effects of power. "Truth" is not to be taken as an ultimate and absolute, but as the best understanding or interpretation possible for those involved.

Certain conditions must be met for groups to approach Habermas's ideal. Firstly, the agendas must be open. All must have equal access to the floor; all assumptions must be allowed examination; persons must not be punished for their opinions; and strategic communication must be eliminated. Habermas contends that social order depends upon four assumptions which are made in speech acts. These are: truth (what is being spoken reflects an actual reality), truthfulness (the speaker is sincere), understandability (the speaker's symbols and gestures are clear), and comprehensibility (the speech act occurs in a cultural situation where it can be correctly interpreted and assimilated). Without these assumptions being made, communication would be impaired or would break down altogether. Con artists, advertisers, public relations firms, and political campaign professionals all attempt to slant or systematically distort communication to meet strategic objectives. This activity is "parasitic" upon the norms of "competent communication," where the four assumptions are met.

In current society, these communicative norms are systematically distorted by power interests. Mass communication and large scale organizations work against congruent communication. Billions of dollars are spent annually to convince people to purchase products, support candidates, revere the military, and advocate wars and other causes they would not otherwise support (T. R. Young, 1991). Pseudo-communication abounds. If one seeks to establish participatory "competent" communication, one must protect the interactive situation from the damaging consequences of power differentials and strategic motivations.

Individuals may be unaware of their own strategic motivations, due to unconscious dynamics. Habermas (1973) views psychoanalysis as a method to assist in cleansing communicative processes of such interferences. Habermas, like the tradition of critical theory which he follows, uses Freud's theories to explain both the distortions of political communication and the way personal psychopathology can interfere in the creation of a rational community. Emotions seem only to get in the way in this creative process.²

Habermas's participatory group process is currently being utilized as a basis for a communicative ethics and for forming democratic work groups in corporations (Gustavenson, 1990). In my research with groups of women making mid-life transitions, I used Habermas as a basis for structuring the groups within the setting of a large university bureaucracy. Very quickly, I looked elsewhere for an understanding of the emotional dynamics which emerged (Bentz, 1989).

Antithesis: Emotional Learning in Satir and Langs

A second major theoretical basis for structuring the group, which integrates emotional and intellectual learning, is the work of Virginia Satir. Unrecognized and unacknowledged emotions negatively effect one's ability to be present and to act effectively and efficiently. Following the lead of Gregory Bateson (1972, see also Rieber, 1989), Satir stresses the importance of congruent communications for self-esteem and good relationships. Congruent communication is defined as being in touch with one's own feelings and verbalizing them in a direct but unaggressive manner. Unlike blaming, placating, objectivistic, intellectualistic or distracting communication, in congruent communication (leveling), one "owns" ones feelings and thoughts and comments directly on the relationships at hand. Historically, families and societies have functioned in incongruent patterns.

According to Satir (1983), in "conjoint family therapy," the therapist acts as a coach and provides an emotional resource. Family members learn to recognize and express their emotions, expectations, and desires vis a vis one another. Satir contends that emotional dynamics in current relationships are continuations of patterns learned in our families of origin. As Thomas Scheff said, echoing James Joyce: "All of history is a nightmare from which we must awake."

Robert Langs's "communicative psychotherapy" (1978) focuses on enhancing leveling between patient and therapist through the interpretation of "derivatives." Derivatives are metaphorical or allegorical statements which Langs sees as indirect commentaries on the relationship at hand. Langs points out that persons often express their feelings about what is happening indirectly, by the use of stories about events or relationships outside of the immediate one. For example, a patient talking about how his wife does not listen to him, his uncle does not return his calls, and his boss is always out of town, may be referring indirectly to his perceptions about the lack of responsiveness of the therapist. Given adequate supportive statements by the therapist, such as references to the therapist having been late, the therapist may offer an interpretation relating this material to their relationship.

Langs tends to intellectualize emotions. His interpretive practice takes place in an atmosphere of allegiance to rigid professional norms of communication based on the suppression of one's own feelings (Langs, 1978). The emotional bonding which occurs in the therapeutic setting is treated only as a tool for analysis.

What is of value to emotional learning from Langs's work, however, is a sensitivity to the derivative meanings of communication (See Langs, 1983). By analyzing the implications of chosen topics for sociodrama, role play, or discussion in the group, members can evoke and realize unconscious fantasies and fears as well as unacknowledged emotions about the group and members in the group.

Synthesis: Deep Learning

The synthesis of intellectual and emotional learning is an attempt to get beyond the false dichotomizations of the two. Emotions are not "error factors," or "disturbances" in a rational process. Rather they are a driving force in social action. Emotions may be expressed, repressed, or sublimated. They may be true or false, spurious or essential, or based on accurate or inaccurate perceptions. Critical reflection is essential in order to tell the difference. Emotions, like intellectual structures, can grow and change.

Deep learning is a process of inquiry involving maturation (See Spotnitz, in Kaplan and Sadock, eds., 1972). It is learning which results in a stronger, more expansive self, which can move back and forth in an increasingly rich inner world, to form mature relationships (See Bentz, 1989, for a model of mature relationships). Deep learning is marked by catharses of tears and laughter, involving both release and insight. The process may often include peaks of anxiety and panic or resolution and calm. The deep learning process leads to clarification and also to new questions. Learners often feel fatigued after a deep learning session, but also feel energized. Part of the deep learning process is an attempt to monitor and include the responses and cues of the bodies of the participants.

Deep learning may include analyses of members' emotional states and family systems. Deep learning integrates theoretical understanding by going back and forth between emotional leveling and the conceptual materials at hand. The whole process is one of research into self and others in the supportive group environment. There is consistent feedback between group members about the emotional as well as the psychological and intellectual content of what is being communicated. Reflection includes an analysis of the group processes themselves.

In deep learning, aspects of the therapy group are integrated with the seminar. The deep learning group is more than either seminar or therapy group. It is a focused community where each member brings his or her whole self into the interactive process. Deep learning attempts to refute the accepted truism that self revelatory feedback and intellectual understandings are contradictory processes which must be carefully separated.

The primary difference between deep learning groups (hereafter called "DLGs") and encounter groups, T-groups, therapy groups, and sensitivity training groups (See Gottschalk & Davidson 1972) is that DLGs are truth-seeking communities of inquiry. They foster the maturation of members in all domains: cognitive, affectual, and ethical. Unlike encounter groups, DLGs do not pressure participants to express immediate feelings and evaluations. However, such expression is welcome and, when appropriate, encouraged. Unlike therapy groups, DLGs are not seen as "treatment" for "pathologies" or even "dysfunctions", and members are not seen as "in recovery," as "victims," or even as "survivors." Members of DLGs are co-learners. DLGs look for communicative problems, such as double binds, which make incongruent communication and consequent "schizophrenic" types of individual and social detachment so prevalent. (See M. C. Bateson, in Rieber, ed., 1989)

Presented here are examples from two small group seminars which attempted to accomplish the integration of emotional and intellectual learn-

ing. Both groups were graduate seminars in sociology at major universities. The first concentrated on the theory and practice of small groups (my seminar "Bentz"). The second dealt with sociological theory and research (The Scheff seminar). The names of participants have been changed, except for occasional references to Scheff and to me.

The Scheff Seminar on Theory and Research

Thomas Scheff integrates intellectual and emotional learning through a theory which describes how emotions relate to the quality of the social bond at any given time. Scheff (1990) contends that in every communicative interaction, persons are either damaging, enhancing, or maintaining the existing social bond. All interaction is a mixture of solidarity and alienation. Shame and pride are the two poles of social emotions. We feel pride when we feel connected to each other and shame when we feel either fused or alienated. Individuals with healthy social bonds acknowledge the boundaries of the self and of the other. Many people mistake fused emotions with intimacy. This is a pattern which today has been labeled "codependency" in the pop psychology literature. It is typical for women to be comfortable with fused emotional boundaries and for men to feel more comfortable in a state of alienation. Secure social bonds involve emotional and intellectual "leveling" which means communicating accurately what you think and feel at any given time, especially concerning your relationship with the person with whom you are communicating.

Theoretical learning, to Scheff, is necessarily tied to emotional learning. One cannot inquire with sensitivity and awareness into social, political, and philosophical issues without self-examination. To Scheff, this necessarily means examining both shame and pride, and their relationships to the emotional knots and bonds which continue from our relationships with members of our families of origin.

Scheff accomplishes the objectives of deep learning in his seminars by teaching theories of the social bond, of family of origin, and of emotional dynamics, he uses role play of scripts with members of the family of origin, and discussion of key theoretical texts. Within the group setting, a method of videotaping and analyzing the underlying emotional dynamics in the interaction is taught and promoted. Scheff calls this "discourse analysis." Unlike "conversation analysis," discourse goes beneath and beyond the words verbally expressed, to interpret the underlying emotions. Scheff eliminates the role of the professor as the group facilitator in his seminars in an attempt to mitigate against the distortions of power. He uses the tech-

nique of volunteer group facilitators who set the agenda for each session with the group.

Thomas Scheff's model for the seminar integrates both theory and practice, and involves and respects participants as whole persons. He integrates his work on self-esteem, shame/pride, solidarity and alienation, creativity, the macrosociology of war and peace, and microanalysis of discourse and family systems into his seminars. In this way, the structure of the group is not contradictory to the intent of the material—to enhance and emancipate human beings. His seminars are group "metalogues." (See Bateson, 1972, p. 1) The intellectual content—the theories, and readings in the texts become threads in the fabric that is the lifeworld of the group.

Example One: Tuning In

One way in which emotional aspects may be brought into any group process is through "tuning in." At the beginning of the group session, each member is invited to briefly describe his or her state of being. This may include current feelings, thoughts, or matters of concern. The check-in is offered freely, without pressure to disclose, but with acceptance of whatever each feels is important. It is agreed that members will not feel obliged to provide feedback. If a member wishes to comment, this is accepted. Some members speak cursorily about what is on their minds, while others bring up deep and important concerns. For example, one day "Nancy" came into the group and burst into tears. Her daughter was in the Philippines, and there had been an earthquake. Her daughter was not hurt, but the worry and stress had upset her. Her tears were accepted and her feelings supported before the group went on to other matters. By contrast, in the same check-in, another group member reported rather cursorily on his work on a term paper.

Each participant brings to the group (seminar) an emotional state—a condition—which must either be acknowledged and accepted, or repressed. Congruent communication requires that members express "where they are" emotionally and physically. As in the following example, no one blames anyone else, or offers personal criticism or attacks.

Jack: I'm feeling pretty good. I'm getting into some areas of Mead that I like.

Charles: I'm doin' pretty good. It's the end of the quarter. . . Like Lorrie, not sure where goin', work well under pressure, got a new idea, feel pretty good about where I'm going.

Joan: I'm feeling good. I learned how to use the video camera this week, and I'm feeling a little bit anxious, because I'm going to be interviewing some students. . . . It's kind of like falling into a dark hole. I'd like some feedback about where I'm going.

Valerie: I'm O.K. I apologize for being late. I'm tired. I've been in a stressful situation all week. I've been in a kind of a fishbowl situation at a retreat which is part of a job interview. It's been going on all week starting Sunday through Friday twelve hours a day. I was looking forward to coming here only to find out I'm being videotaped. But it will be O.K., I guess.

Ray: I'm kind of tired, I was working really late last night.

Negotiating an Agenda

An important way to alleviate the power dynamics which can distort communication is through the ongoing negotiation of agendas. This includes negotiation of goals, activities, processes and amounts of time spent. Power distortion is mitigated through the changing of facilitators. Each seminar session, a different student volunteers to function as group facilitator.

The agenda is open for additions and revisions during the negotiation process, and the amount of time to be spent on each agenda item is decided upon. This does not mean that the facilitator moves the clock by an iron hand, because as things come up, the time for each item can be renegotiated, and items that do not get covered are often tabled until the next meeting. Toward the end of each session, plans for the next session are tentatively made, with each person, including the professor, given the opportunity to offer an agenda item. A volunteer is sought to be facilitator for the next session, and the tentative agenda is given to this person. Then closing comments are made by each member. Again, each person is encouraged to express his or her emotional and mental state. Others are free to offer supportive comments if they are moved to do so.

Charles: I probably sound kind of funny. Actually I'm feeling better. I'm on the down side of a cold. I'm looking forward to a vacation I've got planned for next Tuesday.

I volunteered to be facilitator. Let me just read what Joan wrote down, agenda. . . . Dr. Scheff has agreed to tell about Durkheim, and that has already been put off for a week, we talked about doing some family systems dialogues, Joan, Valerie

and Robert and I have volunteered ours, we'll have to talk about research proposals, Lorrie, Joan, Gerald and myself. I hope I'm not missing anyone. Does anyone have anything to add to that list?

Scheff: Last time I mentioned we should talk about what we would do in the next session, next week.

Jane: We need to have time for Joan to get her feedback. . .

Gerald: All right. . . Let's see. I'll reread the list then: we have Durkheim, perhaps some family systems dialogue, I could do research stuff, Joan's research, and the agenda for next week and next term. Any suggestions for where we begin? (looks at Scheff)

Scheff: Let's see, could we put the . . . family systems next to last, and start off with the research, then Durkheim, then family systems and then the future.

Gerald: We have two hours, so, we could maybe devote twenty-five minutes or so to each? Is it alright if we cut it up like that?

June: Is that long enough for Durkheim?

Scheff: (quietly) "Oh, yeah"

LAUGHTER

Closings

As with tuning or checking in, closing comments are framed in terms of one's own emotional/intellectual state at that immediate moment. No one blames anyone else, or offers personal criticism or attacks. One of the most moving closing comments in the seminar was made by T. Scheff at the end of a highly productive session. It was especially poignant because he is an internationally known scholar and author, speaking at a major university in a graduate seminar on theory and research. He spoke with his eyes diverted downward, slouched in his seat: "I feel bad. . . I feel inadequate. . . I feel like a failure." Because Scheff could level about what he was feeling at that time, each student could be free to acknowledge his or her own feelings of embarrassment, shame, failure, lack. He demonstrated one of the ways by which power figures can dilute the effects of their power—by showing vulnerability to such feelings.

Bentz's Self-Reflective Group

This group was a graduate seminar on the theory and practice of small groups. The group met over a three month period, on three weekends once a month. On these weekends the group met on Friday evening, all day Saturday and on Sunday morning. In between meeting times, the group members reviewed tapes and notes from the group and related theoretical readings to what occurred in the group itself. The theories most discussed and applied were object relations (Dunfy, 1972), group developmental (Lacoursiere, 1980), structural functional (Mills, 1990), and group fantasy (Slater, 1966). The theories which most informed the ongoing process, but which were not read and directly applied in writing by the group members, were those of Habermas, Scheff and Satir.

On the first weekend I used the technique of open-ended choices, with myself as clear leader but with a participatory, non-threatening emotional style. The first weekend was marked by Ralph's absence on the first night, and by two sociodramas on Saturday, the first representing Roger's multiple internal selves, each played by a different person, each representing a different attitude toward the recent declaration of war against Iraq by President Bush. The second sociodrama represented Kathy and her husband in several scenes involving conflict. Larry continually left the room, and asked for a break. He seemed uncomfortable throughout this first session.

Group members viewed videotapes of the first weekend, and related what had actually happened to theoretical frameworks. After a month's absence, the second weekend began with an attempt to disperse the role of the facilitator among different group members, using T. Scheff's model. Ralph, the most domineering male in the group, volunteered to be the first facilitator, setting the stage for conflict between those who wanted a traditional structure and those who wanted to continue to explore a less structured approach. One extreme was supported by Roger, whose ideal was a "leaderless group," where each person would be responsible for leveling. Saturday afternoon, Gladis, an extremely nondirective leader, took over the role of group facilitator. Most of her facilitation centered on trying to decide what to do. Sunday morning I took over leadership again and began with an exercise in "leveling" with the group sitting on the floor in a circle, touching feet and holding hands or with their arms around each other. The session ended with intensive critical feedback between members and the recognition that the group had finally opened itself up to true leveling. This occurred after I confronted them with a Langsian interpretation of a discussion of rape and fear of rape which Nancy had brought up following the time on the floor. (The Langsian interpretation involved the suggestion

that they felt violated by the physical contact in the group and threatened by the fantasies and suggestions brought up by the exercise).

The third session continued the leveling in a less conflictual and more relaxed manner. The group had been through its crisis, and now entered a phase of high productivity. Kathy had emerged as a group scapegoat, and Barbara did not return. Gladis, Nancy, and Rhonda represented a clear "feminist coalition," Ralph and Larry masculine tradition, and Roger and Joyce the voices of knowledge, skill, and reason, with Cordelia supportive all around.

Saturday morning began with Joyce presenting a problem which she wanted to have the group present and analyze in the form of a sociodrama. The problem concerned her relationship with a male friend, with whom she had lived for several years. This friend was unable to continue the friendship because she had a serious boyfriend. Her friend was jealous of the sexual relationship she had with her boyfriend. He had agreed to a "friendship only" relationship with her, but had changed his mind about it. She consequently felt betrayed. In the role play, Roger played the friend and I played Joyce. The dramatization was followed by a discussion of sexuality and intimacy, and male and female feelings along these lines. Following this emotionally involved discussion, Ralph once again brought up his need to feel that we adequately cover the theoretical content of the course. I agreed to present a brief lecture after lunch in which I would overview the field of small groups theory and research, distinguishing between sociological research approaches and psychological research approaches. I found giving the lecture personally alienating, and because of this my anger came through as I lectured. A student remarked that she was afraid to sit close to me at that point. Once again the group had turned to discussions of intimacy, sex roles, and sexuality.

Transcript: Langsian Interpretation of Derivatives

Valerie: What is it in the group which brings the discussion back to issues of sexuality, intimacy, relationships not going the way they should, betrayal. . . . What is the derivative (in the Langsian sense) interpretation of why we did that particular sociodrama this morning? (Joyce's problem with maintaining her Platonic friendship with a male.)

Gladis: I think it has to do with the clash between two different factions who want intellectual and who want emotional stuff to go on. . . . these have sexual connotations, perhaps the theory people are uncomfortable with emotions. . . .

Kathy: I think we're exploring group intimacy, we're trying to evaluate intimacy within the group, and that's . . .

Joyce: We're also finding out what intimacy is within this group, we're finding out what it will mean for us . . .

Roger: It's more of a I think it's very unfamiliar to be authentic and talk about what's going on in a group like we were this morning. As so it's like my natural tendency's to drift away from that. . .for me it rings true that it takes a lot of effort and energy to be that present with other people. It was sort of along gender lines. . . .

Gladis: I would like to ask Valerie about female theorists. Every theorist we read about here was male. . . . I read where there are female processes and male processing is different. . . .

(Here follows a discussion of male and female theorists, intimacy, and the energy required to be emotionally present.)

Intellectual Learning in Context of Emotional Understanding

The above example is, itself, an intellectual discussion about intellectual and emotional understanding.³ The following segment shows integration of emotional and intellectual learning through the group members' interpretation of their own processes. I selected this particular segment to transcribe because it shows how concepts or theories are brought into the discussion spontaneously, as the need arises.

The session continues with are several requests for information or analysis. Gladis requests female theorists (directed at Valerie). She requests an explanation from Joyce of Martin Buber's concepts of I-Thou Relationships. Nancy inquires about power and her motivation for feeling in conflict with Ralph. Then Nancy brings up her conflicted feelings about intimacy in the group and the group's termination. Joyce offers emotional support for dealing with the termination of the group by presenting Buber's viewpoint on the value of I-You relationships. Here emotional reassurance is exemplified in the form of the intellectual comments.

As this transcript continues, it moves into a theoretical explication which emerged from the concerns of the group. The discussion of theory arose from the grass roots of the process itself:

Joyce: I wonder if it's possible to do that over the whole day. I think of Martin Buber's I-Thou, I-You relationship this morning. He says we cannot sustain it long. The demands of everyday life. . . .

Gladis: I wonder if you could explain Buber. I've heard his name (looks at Joyce)

Joyce: Buber makes a distinction between the I-dash-You relationship and the I-dash-It relationship. In the I-dash-It relationship usually it is descriptive, purposive, immediate. Where as the I-You relationship is hard to describe it is not object oriented but being in itself, it is not a set of characteristics, it is a whole. It is impossible to be in it all the time. He says that to live [43.29] authentically we must be open to I-You relationships. You can't make it happen, it flows you are open to it happening, it's never sustained. This morning we had an I-You relationship, we were leveling, being real with each other . . .

The rest of the discussion is about the relationship between I-you communication, gender, power, intimacy, and boundaries. Following this by a student brings up the subject of the impending end of the group and her feelings of grief. Several students and I cried during this segment.

Example: Family Systems Dialogue

In the Scheff seminar, the most poignant example of intellectual/emotional learning was a role play of a group member's conversation with his mother. In the process, Robert leveled with his mother about the way he felt when she made a critical comment about his shirt. He went down to a deep feeling level, and commented about his feelings as he experienced them. Precisely at that moment, he learned about an unacknowledged feeling dynamic between himself and his mother. Those present learned not only "about" family systems and sociology of emotions, but also how emotions can be deeply understood. Robert demonstrated—embodied—a principle which Scheff had stated on a previous occasion in the group. "To become a good sociological researcher you must first of all become a researcher of your own family system." Robert presented his dialogue in the form of role play with "Joan," playing his mother.

Robert: O.K. this is um my mother at "Did you put on that shirt today. Did you put on that shirt today?"

Ahm I say "Yes Mom, com'on we've got to go pick up Judy."

My mom is a bit incredulous, there's surprise in her voice. "Did you put on that shirt today? Yes Mom, we've got to go pick up Judy. "

Its a commentary on the state on the condition my shirt is in. She's making a comment on my shirt. It looks like I slept in it she's saying.

Joan: Oh.

Group: laughter

Robert: and I don't respond to that until twenty-four hours later. I have a little fit of anger. . . .

Valerie: Was that pretty typical, your mother asking you about the shirt and your?

Robert: Un hum. . .

Scheff: O.K. The dynamic way to deal with this here is to have the coach give Robert counterfactuals. . . . What we are looking for here is . . . emotional discovery. The reason that we are all stuck in our family system is that we are avoiding occluded emotions. The point of doing the role taking is to find those feelings.

Joan: O.K. Lets look at the mother son Uh, What would a counter factual to this be, to your mother. O.K. she could say, "Did you put on that shirt today?"

Robert: "What do you mean mom." Go ahead.

Joan: You, it kind of looks kind of like wrinkled and kind of inappropriate.

Robert: Hum! I can feel the anger welling up . . . [laughs]

Robert: I'm ready to like blow your head off He He [laughs]

Group: [laughs]

Joan: You always wear shirts like that.

Robert: Ha Ha

Group: laughter

Robert: Eah Ah. I'm not going to say mom what you always do. He he he. This is real liberating for me to laugh about this, you know, and it is real hard for me to think of a constructive response cause I can think of a thousand ways of really [hits his fist into the palm of his other hand twice, audibly] getting into it. . . . Say that to me again what you just said.

Joan: You always wear shirts like that. . . .

Robert: Ha He. . . I tell you what mom. I feel real cut off from you right now. I feel real cut off from you right now.

Joan: I don't understand what you are talking about.

Valerie: Do you want her to be like your mother with you?

Robert: No, she doesn't have to be like my mother. She's just trying to get me to feel things, any which way, no matter

what. . . .

Joan: Um, I don't understand what you are talking about.

Robert: Gee that really makes me mad. He He!

Robert: You know I just feel like hitting and scratching and biting. . . . Well, want me to try to explain?

Joan: Yeah, Why don't you try to explain, this is your problem.

Robert: Yeah, now I feel like crying, you see. [Looks down. Looks like he is going to cry.] Say it again.

Joan: Just like that?

Robert: Uh, that would be great.

Joan: Yeah, why don't you tell me what it is that you feel.

Robert: You sure you want to do this? [laughs heartily]

Joan: Yeah.

Robert: O God. I feel real hurt. Like infinitely hurt. That's how I feel.

Joan: I'm sorry you feel hurt.

Robert: That doesn't help a lot.

Joan: I'm glad you told me you feel hurt.

Robert: That helps. [nods at her]

Joan: You know, you and I need to level about this.

Robert: We've never done this before.

Joan: You want to level now?

Robert: Be receptive.

Joan: Well, I'm kind of scared of talking about these things.

Robert: Yeah, me too.

Joan: I'm pretty scared.

Robert: Let's be scared together then.

Robert: See that would be closer than I ever got to my mom, that, right there. . . . Now, I'm feeling a lot of feelings right now, I'm all a tremble. (He is visibly shaking.) Uh huh. We. . . , so far this is a big success, Mom, you're doing real good.

Joan: So are you, I really appreciate your telling me.

Robert: Ah, I like to be real direct, and I want to be able to tell you like I'm hurt or angry. Is that all right?

Joan: I would really appreciate that.

Robert: O.K. I feel real blocked right now and my feelings are going away. . . . Now it's coming back, the feelings. I'm real baffled, Mom, and stuck. Is it all right for me to tell you that?

Joan: Yes.

Robert: Are you sure?

Joan: Uh hm.

Robert: Because I feel like I have to be perfect. [Voice quivers, is about to cry.]

Joan: You don't have to be perfect.

Robert: Let me hear that again.

Joan: You don't have to be perfect.

Robert: That's a relief [he he he] Oh I can't tell you what a relief that is. Say that one more time.

Joan: You don't have to be perfect. You're perfect just the way you are.

Robert: No, I don't want to hear that. He He. I don't have to be perfect.

Joan: You don't have to be perfect.

Robert: That's real hard for me to hear from you. Cause I felt [throat catches, like [crying] I've always felt that's what you want—a perfect kid. . . And I can't do it. I cannot do it, I cannot do it. [each time louder, like through crying] can't do it. Can you hear that?

Joan: Yeah. You don't have to be that any more.

Robert: I can't stay in this, I can feel myself clicking in and out. It's a real hard. . . O.K. That's the end, kind of thing, I feel like something happened. . . I took about as much of those feeling as I'm capable of taking at this time.

Joan: Is there anything I can do, being your mother, that would feel really good to you?

Robert: Well, everything you said felt really good. Like I took deep dives, like a relief, like I was doing that for so long.

Joan: Did you ever hear her say that she loved you?

Robert: [nods]

Joan: So you weren't waiting for that.

Robert: No.

Joan: I just thought I'd check that.

John: What happened to the anger?

Robert: I have the feeling that's not the issue. I have gotten angry. . . . Broke dishes, etc. I just felt guilty. . . But this stuff got right to the core. If I could cry for a couple weeks I'd feel better.

Conclusions

Deep learning is a communicative process whereby profound truths are realized. These truths are realized emotionally and intellectually. They are socially created in a small group atmosphere of trust. They may begin with a quest for intellectual understanding consciously open to its feeling components, which are then brought forward and fully expressed (Scheff group). Or they may begin with expression of feelings which culminate in profound intellectual questions with explorations of theoretical explanations (Bentz group). When such shared moments are achieved, members feel renewed. Such moments structurally change the participants.

Deep learning stimulates the maturation of the members through communication processes which promote congruency between emotional and intellectual expressions and allow for catharsis and insight. Crying and laughter are part of the process, as recognitions of ironies and as releases of blocked emotions. Deep learning groups facilitate reintegration of messages from the body and the emotions with intellectual insight. The participants feel calm and energized, peaceful and excited, full of achieved insights and new questions.

NOTES

1. I am indebted to the students in my seminars, especially during the fall and spring terms 1989-1990, and to the students in Thomas Scheff's seminars, spring 1990. I am grateful to Tom Scheff for opening up his seminar to me, and to Rich Applebaum and Don Zimmerman, Chairs of Sociology at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and Joyce Williams, Chair of Sociology at Texas Woman's University, who were supportive of my time as Research Sociologist at UCSB. I greatly appreciate Philip Mayes' encouragement, thoughtful critique, and assistance. Only I am responsible for the content of this article.

2. Stolorow and Atwood (1979) attempt to perfect psychological theory through an analysis of the effects of unfinished issues from the childhood of the theorists and of certain historical factors on their ideas. This is a critical hermeneutics of written discourse which parallels Habermas' "ideal speech situation."

3. During this segment there were no cathartic displays of emotions (crying, laughter). Voices are consistently soft, speech pace is moderate to slow. There were no tense pauses in the speech, no aggressive interruptions, little overlapping speech. There was only one clear "shame" gesture, made by Kathy who hid her face with her hand, from the camera, while talking of common needs for intimacy.

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